"Don't Trash Louisiana," DEQ's Anti-Litter Program



Volunteers remove debris from the shores of the Mississippi in downtown Baton Rouge during the Beach and Inland Waterway Cleanup (Beach Sweep held in September of 2000).

EQ's Litter Reduction and Public Action Program promotes litter awareness throughout the state. The group uses most of its resources in outreach programs to set up litter reduction programs in communities and to educate the public on how to keep Louisiana clean

The Litter Reduction and Public Action Program's goals are to reduce the amount of litter and solid waste discarded on Louisiana's highways, public lands, and waterways through edu-

cational programs. The thrust of this multi-faceted program is to raise litter awareness through education, enforcement, and cleanups. Education is a longterm answer and the program strives to achieve its goals through making presentations to school children, civic organizations, teacher groups, and working closely with law enforcement agencies regarding Louisiana's litter laws. The program encourages proper waste management practices and beautification efforts. It also works to establish a behavioral ethic in the citizens of

the state with regard to the environment and the state's natural beauty.

The staff conducts meetings with communities, public officials, educators, and concerned citizens to promote litter awareness programs. DEQ provides these entities with information and resources to create programs that help lessen the environmental burden created by unwanted Pam Kimball, DEQ's State Litter Coordinator, says, "We let people know that litter affects the economic development, tourism and

the crime rate of our state. Currently,

it is costing Louisiana approximately \$12 to \$14 million a year to clean up litter and that's money that we could use elsewhere."

DEQ provides funds to local governments, 501(c)(3) organizations and governmental units through the Litter Abatement Grant Program.

This program is designed for pro-

jects that further the administration and execution of the Keep Louisiana Beautiful Program. The Louisiana Legislature earmarks \$200,000 from the state general fund for this program that was created for the purpose of supporting communitybased litter abatement programs. In order for a community to receive a grant, the town must submit an application and state the specific projects on which they will spend the grant money. The applications are then reviewed by DEQ staff and a panel of judges awards the money based on the type of project a community wishes to pursue, partnerships that are being formed in the community to accomplish the project, and the environmental benefit the project will have on the community. Pam says, "It's a growing program and it has helped a lot of communities establish litter programs in areas where they normally wouldn't have the funding to do that type of thing." In the year 2000, DEQ received 67 grant applications and 22 grants were awarded.

The Litter Program sponsors two statewide cleanups each year. The first cleanup, the Great American Cleanup conducted in conjunction with Keep America Beautiful, Inc. sponsors a spring cleanup each year for civic organizations, businesses, and communities to promote litter awareness. Last year's national event recorded an estimated 2 million volunteers in 35 states. Louisiana had over 17,000 volunteers across the state removing trash and debris from our highways and public areas. Educational programs regarding the problems of litter are also conducted during this cleanup effort.

The second cleanup, the Louisiana Beach and Inland Waterway Cleanup (Beach Sweep), is sponsored in conjunction with the Center for Marine Conservation and takes place on the third Saturday in September. Volunteers in Louisiana join others across America and in more than 90 countries to pick up trash on the shoreline and in waterways.

DEQ also teams with the Department of Transportation and Development (DOTD) to

sponsor an Adopt-a-Road Program. Civic organizations and businesses are allowed to adopt an area of state highway leading into or through a community for the purpose of removing litter. The program is important because it reduces DOTD's costs and manpower involved in the operation of

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